

Panueil Hall  
(Committee and Commandery Rooms)  
Boston  
Suffolk County  
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-163

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HABS  
MASS.  
13-Bost  
2.

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Massachusetts  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Frank Chouteau Brown, District Officer  
141 Milk Street, Boston, Massachusetts

Addendum To:  
FANEUIL HALL  
Dock Square  
Boston  
Suffolk County  
Massachusetts

HABS NO. MA-163

HABS  
MASS,  
13-BOST,  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS AND  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FANEUIL HALL

HABS NO. MA-163

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MASS,  
13-BOST,  
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Location: Dock Square, Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Present Owner: City of Boston

Present Occupant: The Rouse Corporation

Present Use: Commercial shops; museum

Significance: Faneuil Hall was called the "Cradle of Liberty" because many important meetings of protest were held here before the Revolution. It was the first Colonial attempt at academic design, completed in 1742 from the plans of John Smibert, the Colonial portrait painter, and given by Peter Faneuil, a Boston merchant. It contained a town hall above and a public market below.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1740-1742.
2. Architect: John Smibert designed the original structure which was remodelled by Charles Bulfinch in 1805-1806.
3. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Peter Faneuil, a Boston merchant, funded the building; Samuel Ruggles was the carpenter and Joshua Blanchard the master mason.
4. Original plans and construction: The original structure was of brick construction and was two and a half stories, with open arches below and a bell tower above.
5. Alterations and additions: When the fire destroyed the building in 1762, it was promptly rebuilt on the original plan. In 1805, Charles Bulfinch added a third story and doubled the original 40-foot width, but retained the original style of the building. In 1898-99 the City of Boston reconstructed the hall, substituting iron, steel and stone for wood, as far as practicable.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Georgian, modified to Federal style.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: A freestanding structure containing 8,460 square feet. The building is about 75 feet wide and 98 feet long. Canopies extend over the sidewalk on all four sides to comprise a total area of approximately 13,125 square feet. The following boundaries include the canopies and sidewalk: Bounded westerly by Dock Square 105 feet; northerly by Faneuil Hall Square 125 feet; easterly by Merchants Row 105 feet; and southerly by Faneuil Hall Square 125 feet.

2. Walls: The original bricks are large, laid in Flemish bond with dark headers. The later brickwork is smoother and lighter in color, and lacks the dark headers. The three floors and gable end are demarcated by cornices between each floor and squared brick pilasters between each window (two at the ends) appear to support the cornices.

3. Structural system, framing: Galleries are supported by superposed columns of the Doric and Ionic orders.

4. Openings:

a. Doorways: Arch opening arcades provide access to the market area on the first floor. The individual doorways are recessed and have brick headers surrounds with a stone keystone. Above each door is a lunette window. There are wooden doors with heavily incised panels, hung with HL hinges.

b. Windows: Like the doorways, the windows have rounded arched tops with brick header lintels with a stone keystone. The windows are longer in the second and third stories. They are double hung sash. The top sash has eight panes forming a lunette pattern with twelve lights below it. In the bottom sash are twelve lights. In the first story the windows are shorter and wider, ten over ten sash windows with a lunette matching those of the doorways, above. A series of barrel-shaped dormer windows in the new roof were added in 1805.

5. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: It has a low pitched, front gabled roof with barrel shaped dormers along the side elevations. The gable ends have decorative dentilling around the inside, giving it the appearance of a hugh pediment.

b. Cornice, eaves: There are wide architrave cornices between each story of the three story structure. The cornice to the center between the second and third story is ornamented with a triglyph and metope pattern. There is dentilling along the top of the third story cornice and in the gable ends.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: A row of barrel shaped dormers line the two side elevation of the roof. The roof is surmounted by a large central cupola. At the apex of the latter was a famous weathervane, a huge grasshopper with green glass eyes and long antennae, produced by Deacon Shen Downs of Boston. The cupola was removed in 1805 from the center of the hall to Dock Square or east end of the building.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: After 1858 the market ground floor was appropriated by butchers. In 1740, on the second floor, were offices for town business, and a long hall large enough to seat 1,000 persons. In 1805, the town hall in the second floor was widened and its ceiling raised, permitting the installation of galleries which resulted in an enlarged church-like interior. The great hall on the second floor, now a museum, displays a collection of paintings, many of the portraits being copies of originals that once hung there but that are now protected in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The attic is still the armory of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, which moved into the space in 1806, and contains a collection of military and other objects dating from the colonial period.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Faneuil Hall faces east (though it can be entered from any side) onto a marketplace courtyard.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Nation Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form  
prepared by Edwin W. Small, Assistant to the Director, National  
Park Service.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952).

Mary Anthony, De Wolf Howe and Samuel Chamberlain, Boston  
Landmarks (New York, 1946).

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